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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000471

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/I

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [ASEC](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: PRT NAJAF: GEO OFFICIALS CONFIDENT AS ELECTIONS
DRAW NEAR

Classified By: PRT Najaf Team Leader Angus Simmons for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) This is a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Najaf reporting cable.

¶2. (C) Summary: On February 10 and 16, PRToffs met with local Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and Governorate Electoral Office (GEO) Chairwoman Ms. Bushra Kadhum Zamili to discuss plans for the March 7 national elections. Local security officials confirmed their readiness to provide credible security and help facilitate a smooth election and asked for USG support with specific, last minute items in their countdown to the March 7 Parliamentary election. Zamili explained the steps she is taking to ready her organization and its 285 polling centers for the March 7 general election as well as the March 4 special voting sessions. End Summary.

SECURITY PLANS IN PLACE

¶3. (C) On February 10, PRT met with Najaf Governorate Electoral Office (GEO) liaison officers Brigadier General (BG) Yassir Mahmoud and Iraqi Police (IP) liaison officer Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Jabir Musa Kadhum to discuss the security process for Najaf. LTC Kadhum believes he has adequate support needed to successfully manage the elections, noting that IHEC has opened up a second warehouse to store election materials at the Najaf Center Mall. He also noted that the IP has five bomb dogs to search the 285 polling sites across Najaf. Along with international borders closing 24 hours prior to elections, Najaf International Airport (NIA) will also close. Najaf has 570 policewomen to assist with polling center female voter body searches.

ADDITIONAL USG SUPPORT REQUESTED

¶4. (C) Kadhum requested that USF provide it with items including tents, topographical maps for the their Command Center and police stations, sand bags, concertina wire, two-way radios, bomb-detecting dogs and an Explosive Ordinance Detection (EOD) robot. (NOTE: One of the Najaf IP robots was destroyed in the November 9, 2009 IED detonations near Forward Operating Base (FOB) Endeavor and has not since been replaced. END NOTE.) Kadhum also asked that equipment be installed in the Joint Provincial Coordination Center (JPCC) that would allow for live feeds from Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) flights. NOTE: Although USF would like to use Commander,s Emergency Response Program (CERP) funds to provide this support, unless GEO Chair Ms. Zamili signs the request regulations prohibit them from doing so. She has stated that she would not sign such a request since security is not within her authority, so it appears that the IP will not receive the equipment they need. END NOTE.

GEO DIRECTOR WELL PREPARED FOR ELECTIONS

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15. (C) On February 16, PRT met with the Director of the Najaf GEO, Ms. Bushra Kadhum Zamili and Deputy Director Anwar Tha'aban Abid Ali to receive an update on Najaf's preparations for the national elections. Bushra welcomed the PRT and international observers to any and all of the 285 designated polling locations throughout the province, but cautioned that all observers must be credentialed. She did, however, request that for security reasons observation teams avoid the areas of Kufa and Najaf where the Kufa Mosque and shrine of Imam Ali reside respectively. She added that even she and her colleagues had faced minor harassment in some areas of Kufa where militias and gangs have influence.

16. (C) Zamili said that the GEO has designated 17 sites for the March 4 special elections, including four hospitals and thirteen army bases, and welcomed international observers to attend. Of the 285 polling centers that will be used on March 7, twenty have been identified for non-registered voters such as Internally Displaced Persons. Zamili explained that the election results will be tabulated at each center in quadruplicate, with the original going to IHEC headquarters in Baghdad, one copy posted at the polling station for 24 hours, one with the polling station manager, and one with Najaf GEO headquarters. She confirmed that polling stations will be open from 7:00 a.m. till 5:00 p.m. All polling centers are required to report results to local GEO headquarters by evening of March 7. Local officials will summarize results for the province and hand-deliver via courier to Baghdad's national IHEC center in the morning of March 8. She also said that the tally from each voting

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station would be posted on the door of the station when the counting at the station was complete.

HOPE FOR THE BEST, PREPARE FOR THE WORST

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17. (C) Zamili expects the process to run as smoothly as the January 2009 provincial elections did; however, she was pragmatic and noted that she was preparing for the worst. When asked about fraud, she said she is focused on training of the election staff as the key to ensuring a fair and smooth election. Speculating on the potential for violence, Zamili said, "I don't know if all losing parties will refrain from doing something" in reaction to poor results. Najaf has 257 candidates running for 12 seats.

18. (C) Comment: Ms. Zamili is the only female GEO director in Iraq. PRT has had a very cooperative relationship with local IHEC and Iraqi security officials with respect to elections preparations. PRT Najaf, through Quick Response Funds (QRF) and Iraq Rapid Assistance Program (IRAP) grants and purchases, has provided over \$550,000 in support for local GEO, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) capacity training, and voter education for these crucial elections. Zamili presided over the successful January 2009 provincial government elections, knows her job, and appears very much ready to conduct the upcoming elections. Meanwhile, the campaign in Najaf has started in dignified full-swing with glossy posters and campaign pamphlets everywhere. END COMMENT.
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